

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7207

C O N F I D E N T I A L 2484

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT PGOV GH

SUB: INDEPENDENT GHANAIAAN NEWSPAPER SHUT DOWN AGAIN

1. THE INDEPENDENT ACCRA WEEKLY NEWSPAPER "ECHO" ANNOUNCED APRIL 13 IN A CIRCULAR TO SUBSCRIBERS THAT THE PAPER WOULD NOT APPEAR THIS WEEK BECAUSE OF A DELAY IN OBTAINING RENEWAL OF ITS LICENSE TO PUBLISH. NO OTHER REASON WAS CITED.

2. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL 15, THE GOG COMMISSIONER FOR INFORMATION , COL. C.R. TACHIE-MENSON, ISSUED A STATEMENT ASSERTING THAT THE PUBLISHERS OF THE ECHO HAD NEGLECTED TO FILE FOR RENEWAL OF THEIR LICENSE A MONTH BEFORE ITS EXPIRY. AS REQUIRED BY THE REGULATIONS, AND THEREFORE THE NON-RENEWAL OF THE LICENSE WAS THE PUBLISHERS' OWN FAULT. IN AN ORAL RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, HOWEVER, TACHIE-MENSON STATED THAT THE ECHO'S LICENSE WILL BE RENEWED ONLY WHEN THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION IS SATISFIED THAT THE PAPER IS NOT "SUBVERSIVE."

3. COMMENT: THE ECHO HAS HAD TROUBLES WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GHANA BEFORE, AS SOME OF THE GHANAIAAN MILITARY EQUATE ANY CRITICISM WITH SUBVERSION. TACHI-MENSON AND THE GOVERNMENT -OWNED GHANAIAAN TIMES HAVE ATTACKED THE ECHO REPEATEDLY IN RECENT MONTHS, BUT THIS PARTICULAR EPISODE IS GENERALLY ASCRIBED TO LAST WEEK'S ECHO ARTICLE DENYING ANY NEED IN GHANA FOR COLOR TELEVISION. THE INTRODUCTION OF
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COLOR TELEVISION HERE IS TACHIE-MENSON'S LATEST HOBBY-HORSE,

AND HE HAS JUST RETURNED FROM A TRIP TO FRANCE ALLEGEDLY PAID FOR BY FRENCH TELEVISION EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURERS TO ENABLE HIM TO LOOK INTO THE OPERATION OF COLOR TELEVISION SYSTEMS. ON HIS RETURN, THE GOG ANNOUNCED THAT IT WOULD ADOPT COLOR TELEVISION IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THOUGH THE ECHO DID NOT SAY IT, EVERYONE IN GHANA ASSUMES THAT TACHIE-MENSON'S COMMISSION ON ANY SALES OF FRENCH TELEVISION EQUIPMENT TO GHANA WILL BE SUBSTANTIAL. IT LOOKS AS IF THE COMBINATION OF TACHIE-MENSON'S EGO AND THE REGIME'S UNEASINESS OVER ANY MANIFESTATIONS OF A FREE PRESS HAS STRUCK ANOTHER BLOW FOR CENSORSHIP IN GHANA.
BLACK

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